MARVEL

PG 55 153

WELLS

RANDOLPH

FAUCHER

PETER PARKER™ SPIDER-MAN®

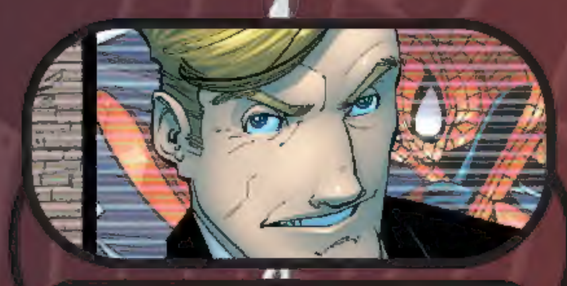
THE RULES OF THE GAME PART 3

At a demonstration on Radiation, high school student Peter Parker was bitten by an Irradiated Spider from which he gained the Arachnid's Incredible Abilities. When a burglar killed his beloved Uncle Ben, a grief-stricken Peter vowed to use his Great Powers in the service of his fellow man, because he learned an invaluable lesson: With Great Power There Must Also Come Great Responsibility.

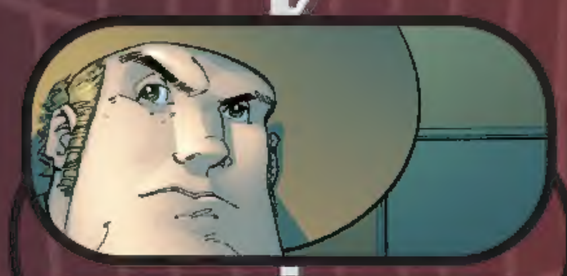
PETER PARKER™ SPIDER-MAN®

"Rules of the Game"

Peter Parker
SPIDER-MAN



Donald Hart



Buck Masterson

Gary Wisen

Edwin Hills

PREVIOUSLY

Spider-Man's rogues' gallery has been busy, assaulting the wall-crawler twice in as many days, the most recent attackers being Scorpion and his inept robotic ally, the XP-2000. Linking the assaults are the small cameras attached to the enemies' bodies, capturing every detail of our hero's battle. As Spider-Man works to decipher the motivations of his attackers, Peter Parker struggles with his role as a high school teacher. Does the nature of his second profession preclude him from lecturing on the evils of violence? Does he mean it when he says he'd never fight a battle he didn't absolutely have to? These questions, however, must take a back seat as Spider-Man rushes to glean knowledge from his biggest clue thus far, the tattered remains of the XP-2000.

Little does he know that the businessmen responsible for his battles, spooked by the capture of the XP unit, are rushing themselves. The secrecy of their venture must be protected, but dare they use Hollywood player Gary Wisen's "secret weapon"?

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GZZZZ!

I AM THE XP-2000, AT YOUR SERVICE-- SKRK!-- CRUSH YOU. CRUSH YOU IN MY CLAWS.

YOUR XP UNIT REQUIRES MAINTENANCE. PLEASE REATTACH METAL CLAWS.

So you can...?

SKRK! CRUSH YOU IN THEM.

I AM THE XP-2000, AT YOUR GZZZZZZZ...

Hmmm!

ZZZZZZZZZZZZZ...

BANG!

THANK YOU.

Well, *what* do we have here?

I'm sorry, Mr. Storm, he was quite persistent.

Not a problem, Betty.

So what brings you to our galaxy, *Chewbacca?*

Stan Lee Presents

Rules of the Game

Written by ZEB WELLS
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Yes... yes.

You're really quite proficient at this, aren't you?

Hmm? Oh, I pride myself on being a bit of a scientist, yeah. I'm just glad I could use your lab. Half the time I drop by you guys are off in the ***negative zone*** or something.

Ah yes... ***"off in the negative zone or something."*** I never get tired of hearing that. You know, statistically less than 1% of our adventures take place in the negative zone ***proper.*** And the reward-to-risk ratio is actually quite favorable if one takes into account--

Reed...

GZZZ. BAD TOUCH. GZZZ.

Sorry. ***Where*** did you say you came across this specimen, again?

It attacked me with the Scorpion yesterday, the second attack in as many days. Nothing too odd in the parade of violence that is my life, but both attackers were wearing cameras. I was hoping to somehow track the signal--

WHERE DID YOU GET THAT? IS THAT MINE YOU SON OF A-

Oh dear. You seem to be upsetting him.

But--

Perhaps I would have better luck. I get along well with robots... we seem to understand each other.

How are we doing today? My name is Reed, what are you called?

XP-2000, BUT I PREFER TO BE CALLED XP.

XP, do you mind if I check your hardwiring for video transmission devices?

I DON'T SUPPOSE THAT WOULD BE A PROBLEM... GZZZ!... REED.

Hmmm. Direct satellite feed. Very impressive, XP.

YOU'RE THE FIRST ONE TO NOTICE...

This here's about the ***weirdest*** thing I ever saw.

XP never talked to ***me*** like that...

I don't know, I'd ***still*** rather watch this than, say, wrestling.

Well I just got off the phone with a very angry Sicilian "businessman." Surprise, surprise, he wasn't too happy about our own Mr. Wisen's disturbing choice of villains.

What is everyone worried about?

H--how bad ***is*** it...?

You tell me. How much information is there to be gleaned from your creation? I know this location is properly masked, but simulcasting Spider-Man's battles may have compromised our viewers...

Only if they interpret the triangulation data for broadcast points--

XP, I'm going to search for triangulation data for your broadcast points... you might feel a little discomfort.

NO PAIN, NO GAIN.

Ha Ha! Too right, XP!

What-- are they ***flirting?***

Okay, this isn't the end of the world. We just get this show out of the way and lay low for a while.

Gary, you fool! Have you seen the ***odds*** on tonight's fight? I don't know what kind of track record your boy has, but the makers seem to think Spider-Man will have no problem with the ***pathetic...***

Lay low? We'll have nothing to lay low from when my guy kills Spider-Man. All for the entertainment of the common man, right, Don?

...ROCKET RACER!?!

C'mon, man, I'm standing right here.

Donny, baby! You don't get it?! I'm going for ***camp*** here! ***Biff! Pow!*** Vibrant reds and sickening yellows! Flying skateboards and blasting rockets! Let's not be slaves to taste here.

Gary, all that's fine but--

Are those nipples?

What the-- yo, Gary!

C'mon, Donny. Sure this guy's under-performed in the past, but he's young. He's hungry. He knows if he screws this up he'll be doing ollie's for 1-800-COLLECT.

Fame's a strong motivator, my friend. I mean, have you seen my wife?

So sad. Reduced to playing the villain after innovating something that could be worth *millions.*

Yo, it's a *skateboard.*

With a *rocket* on it.

It is kind of stupid, isn't it? Sorry I said anything.

Okay, you ready to show these guys what you can do, Rocky baby!?

Ready like Freddy.

And since my entrance didn't get me any props...

My exit's gonna kick--

YOUR--

CRACK!!

Huh. Windows sure break easier in the movies...

Heh. Guess that's kind of my fault.

Franco, I think we may need to tweak our odds again.

You're sure you won't let me attach his arms and legs? I've shut off his video transmitter and tweaked his personality...

No time, Reed. I've got to check out these addresses you triangulated for me, ***then*** I'll decide what to do with him.

Very well. Goodbye, XP. Your dismembered torso will always have a home here.

GOODBYE... REED.

I AM BEAUTIFUL, NO MATTER WHAT THEY SAY...

Thanks again, and you might want to cover Sue's ears next time Johnny uses his toothbrush.

So according to Mr. Fantastic, the cameras were broadcasting to over twenty locations in New York City, most of them private clubs. This is starting to get scary. I knew I had at least twenty people that were out to get me, but none that would work together to film my death.

"FRIENDS ARE ANGELS WHO LIFT OUR FEET WHEN OUR WINGS HAVE TROUBLE REMEMBERING HOW TO FLY."

Uh, thanks?

It just doesn't make sense, but I'm done sitting around waiting for something to happen.

XP CAN'T SEE...

Luckily I have a secret weapon no one knows about. An ace in the hole, if you will. I call him...

Peter Parker!

FRIENDS DON'T KEEP SECRETS, SPIDER-MAN, AND SECRETS DON'T KEEP FRIENDS.

I'll remember that, XP.

Back in the day I used to wear disguises under my mask if I thought I might be captured. Purely a defensive precaution.

But Flash always said, "Sometimes a good defense makes the best offense"... or something like that. I never really listened to him.

Okay, XP, hold it down for me.

I'm going in.

Now. Someone in this bar has been watching my battles. And I'm going to find out who.

BAM!

Okay, Parker, be cool. Walk the walk.

Get a load a' this guy.

Hmmmm.

Talk the talk.

Whatta *you* want?

Oh, uh... Coke. On the rocks.

What, you trynna buy drugs or sumpin'?

What? No!

Um, not that I don't like drugs. Love 'em, actually. Drugs and all sorts of illegal stuff.

Hrmph. You gonna place a bet or what.

Oh, well, what's the action today? That is, *um*, what's the score-- I mean...

What is there for me to place money on...

Y'know... for betting.

You ain't heard? Say, you some kinda cop?

Uh-oh. Better crank it up a notch.

What'd you say?! I eat cops for breakfast!!

Whoa, buddy, take it easy. Thought everyone'd heard is all.

Well maybe I was too busy... doing drugs!

Okay, okay...

Spider-Man's takin' on dat lame-o Rocket Racer. Odds are a thousand to one on Spidey. Wit a interestin' spread on how many pints a blood the Racer's gonna lose. Just da diehards here tonight, my friend.

So how much it gonna be?

All of it on my personal hero...

...Spider-Man!!

Yo, Spider-Man put my brotha away...

Yeah, bettin' on...'ims one thing, but show a liddle remorse, fer goodness sake.

And a lunch ticket!?!

LUNCH

Specially when you're playin' wit' five dollars...

Well, at least I found out who's coming for me next. The Rocket Racer. I've got no reason to fight him... thought he was playing it straight.

But that's the point. No reason. What has my life become? I've actually got a bunch of hooligans ***betting*** on my fights. At least I didn't blow my cover...

...which is a nice way of saying I just let five guys beat the tar out of me.

SO YOU SEE IT'S NOT THAT SOCIETY GAVE UP ON YOU, IT'S THAT YOU GAVE UP GZZZZ!

...ON YOURSELF.

...it's a whole new world...

...what the heck was that?

PEOPLE NEED SOMEONE GZZZZ! TO LISTEN.

Y-you're right. I just needed someone to say it. *sob* to let me know I was wanted...

I don't know what I'm going to do with you, XP.

DO NOT WORRY, SPIDER-MAN. MASTER HAS REACTIVATED MY HOMING BEACON. SOMEONE WILL BE HERE FOR ME SOON.

Homing beacon?

Might not have much time...

YO! YO! YO!

Rocket Racer?! What are *you* doing mixed up in this? Thought you were being cool. Staying in school.

I graduated.

And now it's back to being the bad guy?

Student loans, man, what are you gonna do? You makin' any money with your hero gig?

Good point.

OH, DEAR.

SMK!

Thanks.

I've got *more.*

SMK!

BOOM! BOOM!

ARRR!

No! I'm *not* doing this!

IF ONLY I HAD MY METAL CLAWS...

I told you he'd be great! Bam! Zoom!

XP looks upset...

He's not getting up... I'm not sure I like this.

You were the first one to give me a beatin' in my old costume, Spider-Man. And now you'll be the first guy taking one in my new duds.

Kind of reaching for a connection there, aren't you? Bet you nailed the analogy section of your SAT's.

How about this one: bug is to windshield...

...as spider is to wall.

CRASH!

Good one.

W-why isn't Spider-Man doing anything?

Don't you see? The little #$%$'s throwing the fight!! He thinks he can bluff us!?

Hit him harder! Do you hear me?! Make him fight!

No problem.

KUMPH!

THUD!

KRACK!

I'm king of the world!

Fight! Fight, you 6*!6

Hey, this is great. We have a winner.

Shut up, you ignorant hick!! Do you realize what these animals will do if they think we've ***fixed*** this fight?!

Hey, what's going on here?! Spidey ain't even fightin'!!

This ain't right!!

The ***fix*** is in!!

N-now hold on a second--

Oh, wow. I think I won.

...I've never really won before.

He's ***ruined*** everything! ***kill*** him, Rocket Racer! Do you hear me? I'll give you a million dollars...

Just kill Spider-

CLICK!

Hmmmm.

:Cough:

Ma-ma?

Shut up, man! I didn't make the damn thing.

:kaff: :kaff: So what now? Are we done yet?

What gives, bro?

I don't fight people for ***entertainment,*** Robert, I have my standards.

They wanna play games? Burn the joint!

Huh?

Where's my money?!?!

Burn it to the ground!!

Hear that? My *plan* worked!

Smart.

Hey, man. You... you know that I'd never kill you, right? I mean, I'm not a great person and all, but--

Y'know, Robert, I did know. And I want you to know that I appreciate it.

=cough=

I really do...

Cool, brother.

And hey, you want to know the worst part of this silly costume?

=cough= Sure.

Crap keeps falling out of my pockets.

TO EAST 40th St.

There's nothing to worry about, honey! I'm sure there's a ***perfectly*** good reason someone's burning Tatum's swing set down... well maybe termites.

Sir, Franco Seffriedi is on line four. He claims you owe him a lot of money, and then something about a blood feud of epic proportions...

Lock the doors, honey! Just lock the doors and keep away from the windows!

Good advice.

Sandra, call the police.

Now that's how it breaks in the movies...

Hmmm...

Every thirty seconds in New York City someone gets mugged.

Someone gets murdered every minute and a half...

Do you realize how many crimes I could have stopped while I was jerking around, putting on a show for you guys?!

Putting on a show for money!

You think this was about ***money!?*** You idiot! It's about control! We are the richest men in the country, we can influence anyone **we want**-- except for you!

You all think you're so great with your capes and your vendettas and your own rules! Well I want ***in***, do you hear me! I'll ***buy*** my way in!

And ***you're*** not going to stop me!!

--

A gun. Thank you, God.

Now I have an excuse to do this!

You know there's nothing you can do to us. You operate in such a legal gray area as it is, you have no legal ground to stand on.

Well, that's not what the FCC said when I dropped off XP--

You have the XP-2000? Is he alright?

Oh, so you must be "master".

Er, well, you see...

BAM!!

Oh the fcc is taking good care of him. He had alot to tell them about your illegal use of federal broadcast channels. They should be by to ask you all some questions pretty soon. I'll just sit here and wait with you...

Friday... I thought you'd never come.

Oh, Mr. Parker!

Mr. Parker! You look absolutely hideous! What in God's name--

Oh, I'm surprised you didn't hear, Mr. Weathers. I was scoping out the Zoo as a possible field trip location and accidentally fell into the monkey house. Let's just say that the gorilla mating ritual is not for the weary, if you know what I mean...

Er, well... they should fence those up better.

Preaching to the choir, Mr. Weathers.

Damn! What the hell happened to ***you***?

He wasn't worth it, Louis.

He wasn't worth it.

Cool.

Wiretapping! Illegal broadcasts! Organized crime!

I've never *seen* corruption on this level.

We can only thank God that one of your creations has more integrity than all of you put together!

FRIENDS DON'T KEEP SECRETS. AND SECRETS DON'T KEEP FRIENDS.

Yep, that's a chatty robot you've got there, Edwin.

Ha! Now this is broadcast worthy entertainment!!

BHS

END.